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TAGS: PTER PREL PGOV MARR MOPS PINR NG
SUBJECT: NIGER: PM GAMATIE MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR ALLEN

REF: NIAMEY 854

Classified By: Ambassador Bernadette M. Allen, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (S/NF) Summary. On November 2, Government of Niger (GON) Prime Minister (PM) Ali Badjo Gamatie held a meeting with Ambassador Allen (Embassy PolOff was note taker) that broached a wide scope of topics, ranging from the ongoing peace process in the North, the current political situation and discussion of a way forward out of the current political conundrum, regional security and food security. He stated that the GON had in custody, Taghi Ould Youssouf, for whom the Government of Mauritania had requested extradition. He inquired whether USG security services had interest in interviewing him and/or six other individuals in custody who were arrested in another case several weeks ago. He mentioned USG assistance to Malian military and security forces, noting GON concern that Niger is not equipped to prevent the oozing into Niger, for safe haven, of terrorists and violent extremists squeezed by pressure from military and security services in neighboring Mali and Algeria. End summary.

¶2. (S/NF) Government of Niger (GON) Prime Minister Ali Badjo Gamatie requested an urgent meeting with Ambassador to inquire whether the USG has interest in interviewing a known terrorist, Taghi Ould Youssouf, in Nigerien custody. He stated that the Government of Mauritania has requested extradition, but the GON would make Youssouf available for interview by USG security services before sending him to Mauritania, if the USG so desired. In addition to Youssouf, six additional names (presumed to be aliases) of individuals arrested in Tassara, Tahoua several weeks ago were provided with an offer for interview to USG security services. The six arrestees were reported to have been in possession of a number of weapons (Kalashnikovs), four Toyota 4X4 vehicles and two motorcycles. The six subjects reportedly initially claimed to be Nigerien, but local security personnel found that none of the six spoke any Nigerien dialect (Djerma, Hausa, Tamashek, etc.), but spoke Arabic.

¶3. (S/NF) Ambassador passed to the Regional Affairs Office (RAO) and Regional Security Office (RSO) the inquiry about Taghi Ould Youssouf and the six additional names provided:

TAOUDJI, Abdellak Moctar - YOB 1959, Algeria
TAOUDJI, Mohamed Ahmed - YOB 1962, Niger
TOUDJI, Ahmet) YOB 1974, Algeria
TAYOUB, Kaousseyart) YOB 1983 in Albade Tchinta, Niger
SIDI, Mohamed) YOB 1971 in Ingall, Niger
INBRAHIM, Ousseye) YOB 1989 in Albadar Tassara, Niger

¶4. (S/NF) Ambassador believes the new GON PM provided the

name list and offer of interview as an olive branch of sorts.

The PM opened his remarks by stating that despite political differences, all nations need to work together to combat terrorism. He added that GON security officials fear the recent, up-scaled Malian pressure (with USG material support) on AQIM and other violent extremists, as well as pressure from Algerian security and military services, has pushed those groups to establish a presence in Niger. The PM emphasized that the GON security services are not equipped to deal with AQIM or extremists on their own and does not want the Republic of Niger to become a weak link in the Sahel that provides safe haven for terrorists or violent extremists. Ambassador responded in agreement that partners must work together to combat terrorism and violent extremism in the region. She thanked the PM for sharing the information and said she would work to get a reply to the PM's inquiry quickly. (Note: Upon return to the Embassy, Ambassador shared the information with the RAO and RSO for action. RAO informed local contacts of the USG response the next day, but Ambassador was unable to provide response to the PM until November 4, because the PM had been dispatched to Abuja for meetings on Niger's political situation. End note.)

¶15. (C) Ambassador asked the PM for a status report on the end of hostilities in northern Niger and whether the State of Alert soon would be lifted. The PM replied that the rebels and the GON have agreed to a lasting peace, though a few details remain to be ironed out. For example, he said that President Tandja requested the rebels provide maps with marked locations of landmines, but the rebel negotiators reported having used a global positioning system to place the mines. They did indicate that the GPS coordinates for the landmines would be provided to the GON. The PM remarked, "even the rebels use a GPS and are better equipped than some GON security services."

ALLEN